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Epistle from Lady Jane Gray to Lord Guilford
Dudley

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A N
E P I S T L E

F R O M

Lady Jane Gray

T O

Lord Guilford Dudley.

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to be sent

A N
E P I S T L E

F R O M

Lady Jane Gray

T O

Lord Guilford Dudley.

• Supposed to have been written in the Tower, a few Days
before they suffered.

*Quis Regni posthac confidet viribus? aut quem
Gloria decipiet Sceptri, Soliive superbi
Lubrica Majestas?*

• SUPPLEM. LUCAN. lib. iv.

L O N D O N,

Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in *Pall-mall*. MDCCLXII.

T O
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

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M A R Y L E P E L,

Baroness Dowager HERVEY of ICKWORTH,

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Of every Elegant ART,

T H I S P O E M

Is, with the greatest Respect,

I N S C R I B E D,

B Y

HER LADYSHIP'S

Obliged Humble Servant,

GEORGE KEATE.

Advertisement.

LADY JANE GRAY hath ever been regarded, as one of the most amiable and perfect Characters, that the Records of any Nation have delivered down to Posterity. The Circumstances of her Life are uncommon; if not unexampled, and her Misfortunes as singular, as was the Fortitude with which she sustained them; all conspiring to render her a fit Subject for this Species of Heroic Poetry, of which we have but few Pieces in our Language; tho' it seems to have a peculiar Advantage of conveying, in the happiest Manner, the Sentiments of such Characters as are worthy of being celebrated.

THE Variety of Accomplishments, which this unfortunate Princess crowded into the short Period of seventeen Years, and above all, that Justness of thinking which she attained in so early an Age, have deservedly gained her the Admiration of succeeding Times.

BUT

BUT her Story is so well known, that it would be Impertinence to dwell upon it.----Wedded to a Man she loved, and whose Youth and Virtues made him worthy of her Affection, called to a Crown against her Will, throned and dethroned within the little Compass of a Fortnight, dragged from her Palace to her Prison, separated from a Husband doomed to Death, and sentenced to lose her own Head on a Scaffold;----Such were the Distresses that surrounded her, when I ventured to put the Pen into her Hand: awake as she was, to every Passion and Delicacy of Sentiment, which Love, Disappointment, and Calamity could give Birth to; yet, by the Force of Religion, subduing their Poignancy, and at last totally triumphing over them.

I much doubt whether I may have done sufficient Justice to the Character of this virtuous Lady; but hope at least, that I have not departed from Nature, in any Sentiment which I have attributed to her.

Lady

Lady Jane Gray

T O

Lord Guilford Dudley.

FROM these dread Walls, this melancholy Tow'r,
Doom'd the sad Victim of relentless Pow'r,
Where Ruin sits in gloomy Pomp array'd,
And circling Horrors spread their mournful Shade,
I send the Tribute of a short'ning Life, 5
The last Memorial of a faithful Wife.
For ev'ry Hope on this Side Heav'n is fled,
And Death's pale Banner waves around my Head.
It yet perchance may cheer my Lord to know
That SUFFOLK's Daughter sinks not with her Woe: 10
Beneath it's Weight I feel myself resign'd ;
Tho' strong the Tempest, stronger still my Mind.

B

This

This Duty paid to thee, each Care is o'er;
Nor my hard Fortune shall distress me more.

YET spite of all, one anxious Thought survives, 15
For thee, my GUILDFORD, 'tis for thee it lives.
Yes, thou alone with Heav'n divid'ft my Heart,
Tho' all Heav'n's Due, yet Nature gives thee Part.
If Love be still a Crime, I'm guilty still,
But to forget depends not on our Will. 20
Affection once deep rooted in the Breast,
Is sometimes shook, tho' rarely dispossess;
'The ruling Passion there in Triumph reigns,
It sooths my Weakness, but augments my Pains..
O'er the dear past my roving Fancy flies, 25
And brings thy Image to my raptur'd Eyes.
No Mourner's Weeds, no Captive's Chain it wears,
But bright in all it's native Charms appears ;
Such Grace, such Virtue beaming from thy Brows,
As stole my Heart, and fix'd my virgin Vows,

At HYMEN'S Altar such thy Form was seen
 When late we offer'd to the CYPRIAN Queen. —
 How little thought we while the flow'ry Wreath
 Intwin'd our Temples, it was wove by Death!
 Far diff'rent Scenes the Syren HOPE display'd ; 35
 Ah ! how the False One sung, and how betray'd !
 Each Joy she promis'd perish'd in it's Birth,
 And ev'ry flatt'ring Blossom fell to Earth ! —
 But from Man's Weakness still some Comfort flows,
 'Tis that he nought beyond the present knows ; 40
 Heav'n draws a friendly Curtain o'er his Doom,
 And hides in deepest Shades each Ill to come.
 Then be it's Will ador'd, which, understood,
 From seeming Mischief draws forth certain Good.
 Nor in these Lines suspect that I complain, 45
 Tho' Mem'ry loves to tread back Time again.

THUS do I waste the solitary Day,
 With tedious Pace thus creep my Hours away ;
 B 2 And

And if, when CYNTHIA, rob'd in paler Light,
 Revivits Mortals, and directs the Night, 50
 My weary'd Strength the gen'ral Slumber shares,
 The Soul reflecting wakes to all her Cares :
 Delusion o'er my Mind usurps Command,
 And rules each Sense with Fancy's magic Wand.
 One Moment Tidings of Forgiveness brings, 55
 Descending Mercy spreads her Cherub Wings ;
 Our Guards are vanish'd, ev'ry Grief effac'd,
 We meet again, embracing and embrac'd. —
 O Bliss supreme ! — but too supreme to last ;
 Ere Words can find their Way, the Vision's past : 60
 It fleets, I call it back, — it will not hear,
 And fearful Shadows in it's Place appear.
 The unrelenting Queen stalks fiercely by,
 Fate on her Brow, and Fury in her Eye.
 Hark ! the dread Signal that completes our Woes ! 65
 Hark ! the loud Shoutings of our barb'rous Foes !
 I see the Axe rear'd high above thy Head,
 It falls ! — and GUILFORD's number'd with the Dead.
Alas !

Alas! how ghastly! ev'ry Vein streams Blood,
 And the pale Corps sinks in the crimson Flood. ——— 70
 Could that sad Form be once my Soul's Delight? ———
 Quick tear the mad'ning Phantom from my Sight.
 Hold, hold your Hands, ye Ministers of Fate,
 Suspend the Blow, lest Mercy come too late;
 Let Innocence at last your Pity move, 75
 And spare my Lord, my Husband, and my Love! ———
 NORTHUMBERLAND! thee, thee could I upbraid,
 And bid thee view the Ruin thou hast made.
 This mournful Picture thy Ambition plann'd,
 And all it's Colours own thy daring Hand. 80
 But thou art fall'n! ——— nor shall my parting Breath
 Call out for Vengeance in the Hour of Death:
 All now is o'er, the fatal Woof is spun,
 The destin'd Labour of the Sisters done.
 May all Remembrance of thy Guilt subside, 85
 And the dark Grave thy Dust and Frailties hide.

THE searching Eye of Heav'n, whose Wisdom darts
 Thro' all the mean Disguises of our Hearts,
 And ev'ry silent Motive, knows alone
 With what Reluctance I approach'd the Throne. 90
 I never sigh'd for Grandeur's envy'd Rays,
 For regal Honours, or a Nation's Praise.
 My Bosom never felt Ambition's Fire ;
 For what Exchange could GUILFORD's Wife desire ?
 The Bloom of MAY beneath our Feet was spread, 95
 And all it's Roses deck'd our nuptial Bed.
 With thee conjoin'd, each social Joy I found ;
 With thee conversing, Pleasure breath'd around.
 To prize the World aright, and form the Mind
 To my lov'd Books my Leisure I resign'd : 100
 Or absent thou, to cheer the Ev'ning's Gloom,
 Encircled with my Maidens, ply'd the Loom.
 PEACE was my Sister, and my Friend CONTENT,
 The best Companions e'er to Mortals sent ;

Plac'd at my Side they tun'd their soothing Lyres, 105

And sung those Carols Innocence inspires.

But when, obedient to a Father's Pow'r,

And the last Wish of EDWARD's dying Hour,

Destructive Counsel! I my Home forsook,

Affum'd the Purple, and the Sceptre took, 110

Swift from my Sight the heav'nly Pair withdrew,

And Friend and Sister bade me both adieu.

LET such as, flatter'd by a pompous Name,

Risk their own Quiet in Pursuit of Fame,

Beware th' Exchange; awhile their Purpose turn, 115

And from a wretched Queen one Moral learn.

It is the Cheat of ev'ry worldly Joy

To tempt when distant, but possess'd to cloy.

Hence flows a Truth of much Import, 'tis this;

"Content's the highest Pitch of human Bliss". 120

Strange we should then the proffer'd Boon reject!

All know to seek it, yet the Search neglect.

To.

To no one Soil, no Station 'tis confin'd,
 Springing, if cultur'd, in each steady Mind,
 Far from Ambition's fiery Tract it flies, 125
 But lives with Virtue, and with Virtue dies !

O HAD our Lot by kinder Stars been thrown
 Beneath some lonely Shade to Fame unknown ;
 Far from those Scenes remov'd where Pride resorts,
 Far from the Cares, far from the Crimes of Courts. 130
 Unconscious of the Thorns which wound the Great,
 Our lengthen'd Years had own'd a happier Fate :
 Pleas'd with our Fortune, by ourselves approv'd,
 Secure from Envy, and by all belov'd.
 Whilst, from a busy, faithless World retir'd, 135
 By no blind Folly vex'd, no Passion fir'd,
 Calmly we then afar had heard the Strife,
 The Noise, the Tumult that perplexes Life ;
 Smil'd at Contention's visionary Plan,
 And the vain Toils of self-deluded Man. 140

YET cease, my Heart, these plaintive Murmurs cease;
 For why, my GUILFORD, should I wound thy Peace?
 Why with Elyfian Dreams thy Thoughts engage,
 Whilst we are fetter'd on a tragic Stage?
 But say, what Tyranny can reach the Soul? 145
 What Terrors shake her, or what Force controul?
 Immortal as the Pow'r from whence she springs,
 Sick of her Home, she mounts on Fancy's Wings,
 With inborn Freedom nourish'd, spurns her Chains,
 And roves unbounded thro' ideal Scenes! 150
 Ideal Joys are all I now have left,
 Of thee, a Crown, and Liberty bereft;
 Torn from the Pleasures of domestic Life,
 From each fond Rapture of a virtuous Wife:
 By all Hope here forsaken! —— 'tis in vain 155
 That Reason whispers I should not complain:
 A Sigh will heave, in Spite of all my Pow'rs;
 And Sighs are due to Miseries like Ours.——

Ha ! meet no more ! ——— how cruel the Decree ! ———
 Heart-rending Sentence ! ——— no ——— it must not be. 160
 Down Prison Walls, each Obstacle remove,
 And let me clasp once more the Man I love.
 One parting Look a wretched Wife desires ;
 One parting Kiss the Seal of Death requires ! ———
 And is there none to plead th' unhappy's Suit ? ——— 165
 ——— All Ears are deaf, and ev'ry Tongue is mute ! ———
 Then, come the worst ——— Yet, howsoe'er distressed,
 Still shall thy Image live within my Breast ;
 My Senses still that Object shall pursue,
 And each fond Wish be offer'd up for you. 170
 Tho', all unfeeling for this bleeding Heart,
 Our Foes dismiss to Heav'n thy nobler Part,
 Deep in the Dust thy injur'd Form I'll trace,
 And grudge th' unconscious Grave it's cold Embrace. ———
 But hold thy Hand, presumptuous Woman, hold ; 175
 Too warm thy Passion, as thy Pen too bold.
 Far other Thoughts the present Hour demands,
 Lo ! at my Side the shadowy Monarch stands ;

Aid me, great Teacher, this hard Conflict end,
 Tho' King of Terrors call'd, I'll hail thee Friend ! 180
 Since thou alone portray'ft to Mortal Eyes
 How weak, how baseless are the Joys we prize :
 Thou mock'ft our useless Toils, our mimic State,
 And warn'ft a Brother, by a Brother's Fate !
 Thy Moral then shall not be lost on me, 185
 Convinc'd, my Soul approves the just Decree ;
 And unrepining quits this Scene of Strife,
 Which points thro' Virtue to a happier Life.

The Priest this Morn, with ev'ry Art endu'd,
 Th' accursed Purpose hath again renew'd ; 190
 " Be ours," he cries, " our better Faith embrace,
 " And live Preserver of your falling Race.
 " Tho' yet misled, stand forth the Child of ROME,
 " The Queen in Mercy will avert your Doom."
 Merciful Queen !——yet since thus greatly kind 195
 Tell us what Mercy shall th' Apostate find ?

Thy royal Mandate may decide our Fates,

But Peace alone on conscious Duty waits.

Who wars against it, does the Work of Hell,

And arms a Demon he can never quell; 200

Whose Shafts receiv'd, search the wide Globe around,

Nor Herb, nor Balsam heals the fatal Wound.

Bear back, false WINCHESTER, thy proffer'd Bliss,

Weigh Crowns and Kingdoms with a Deed like this,

Far, far too light in Wisdom's Eye they seem, 205

Nor shake the Scale, while Reason holds the Beam.

And can she, GUILFORD, deem me sunk so low,

So fondly wedded to this World of Woe,

To think her Bounty would my Fears entice

To purchase fleeting Breath at such a Price? 210

Which when obtain'd, the poor precarious Toy

A Thousand Ills might weaken or destroy?

No —— since I'm sworn a Sister to Mischance,

Let the Clouds gather, let the Storm advance,

Unmov'd, it's bursting Horrors I'll defy, 215

And steady to my Faith a Martyr die.

For

For Life's alas ! too like the transient Rose,
 Which oft is blasted the same Day it blows ;
 It's Beauty from the Wind a Blight receives,
 Or some foul Canker taints it's crimson Leaves ! 220
 Nor judge it hard to fall an early Flow'r,
 Rescu'd perchance from some tempestuous Show'r,
 From noxious Vapours arm'd with Force to kill,
 The Noontide Sunbeam, or the Ev'ning's Chill.
 Howe'er the Thought appal, Death's gloomy Road 225
 By ev'ry mortal Foot must once be trod !
 Deep thro' the Vale of Tears Man's Journey lies,
 And Sorrow best prepares him for the Skies !
 O then my Husband, I conjure thee, hear,
 If SUFFOLK's Daughter e'er to thee was dear, 230
 By ev'ry Wish of Happiness to come,
 By ev'ry Hope beyond the mould'ring Tomb ;
 If anxious that thy better Fame should soar,
 And shine applauded when the Man's no more :
 Let not the wily Churchman win thine Ear, 235
 Or sooth thy Weakness by his fraudulent Care ;

But

But arm'd with Constancy's unfailing Shield,
 As God's own Soldier valiant, scorn to yield.
 So when Religion stript of each Disguise,
 In ancient Purity again shall rise, 240
 To her true Throne once more shall be restor'd,
 And rule by Reason, stronger than the Sword,
 Posterity our Merits may attest,
 And our fair Deeds by all good Men be blest.
 In distant Times then shall old People tell, 245
 How firmly GUILFORD and his Consort fell.
 To all their list'ning Family relate,
 How our Faith triumph'd, tho' our Woes were great.
 Then shall each Youth and Maid our Names revere,
 Grace our sad Story with a gen'rous Tear, 250
 And give our Dust this Requiem with a Sigh,
 " Peace guard the Shrine where Virtue's Children lie!

O THOU Supreme, on whom we all depend,
 Our common Parent, and our common Friend,
Who

Who deign'ſt to watch us from thy diſtant Skies, 255
 Bidding the Pray'rs of humbled Suff'ers riſe,
 Ruler of Heav'n, ſtretch forth thy mighty Hand,
 And ſave from civil Rage my native Land.
 Let ROME's ambitious Sons no more prevail,
 Blaſt all their Hopes, and let their Counſels fail. 260
 Raiſe up ſome Prince to perfect that great Plan
 Thy Servant EDWARD (under Thee) began ;
 That Error's Clouds diſpers'd may ne'er return,
 And thy pure Light with Fires rekindled burn.
 So Peace, ſad Fugitive, again ſhall ſmile, 265
 And fix her Dwelling on this proſper'd Iſle. —
 Whiſt for myſelf one only Boon I crave,
 Support that Fortitude thy Mercy gave ;
 The Heart thou mad'ſt preſerve ſeverely juſt,
 Firm in it's Fate, and ſteady to it's Truſt. 270
 There, while it beats, thy Praise ſhall ever reign,
 Live, while it lives, and flow in ev'ry Vein :
 Praise the ſole Tribute I have left to give,
 Nay, all a God from Mortals can receive.

COME then, my Lord, my Husband, and my Love, 275
 (For Death alone those Titles shall remove)
 With decent Courage meet thy certain Doom,
 Nor shrink with Horrour at the op'ning Tomb.
 What's in the Grave the virtuous have to fear ?
 'Tis Peace, 'tis Refuge from the worst Despair : 280
 All Strife, all human Contests 'twill adjust,
 Nor can the Hand of Pow'r insult the Dust !
 Religion fitting by the Mourner's Side
 Inspires that Comfort which the World deny'd ;
 And, 'midst our Woes, of this one Truth we're sure, 285
 Whate'er is mortal cannot long endure.
 Our Pains, as well as Joys, soon find an End,
 And, tir'd of both, we call our Shroud a Friend !
 Meet it as such, my GUILFORD, nor thy Soul
 O'er-awe with Fancy, or with Fear controul. 290
 Think, 'twill the Rigour of thy Lot repay,
 Think, 'tis a Passport to the Realms of Day.

On Faith's strong Pinions thou shalt wing thy Flight,
 And (the World conquer'd) with the Blest unite.
 The Pomp of Death, the Scaffold, and the Steel, 295
 The Man recoiling may an Instant feel,
 For Nature will be heard; but be thy Mind
 Warm with it's future Prospects, and resign'd. ———
 What then remains for me? ——— Ah! wherefore ask? ———
 Fain would my trembling Pen avoid the Task; 300
 Here would it stop, nor wake thy Suff'rings more,
 But idle Ceremony now is o'er;
 These Tear-stain'd Lines must their whole Purpose tell,
 And bid my dying Lord a last Farewell.
 A last! a long Farewell! ——— Oh cruel Sound! 305
 It pains, it tears, it harrows up my Wound.
 Alas! the transient Dream! ——— Down, Rebel Heart, ———
 Yet, keen their Pangs that must for ever part! ———
 A Thousand, Thousand Things I had to say,
 But the fleet Minutes suffer no Delay. 310
 Might these fond Eyes once more that Form behold,
 These Arms, tho' 'twere in Death, my Love enfold!

A Woman's Weakness sure might be forgiv'n,
 And this last Frailty be absolv'd by Heav'n.——
 'Twas a rash Wish;——no——shun me,——for I fear 315
 A final Interview we could not bear !
 Ere yet a little Space, this Scene will close,
 And end the Malice of our ruthless Foes.
 Arm'd as we are for Fate, we'll die content ;
 Fortune hath done it's worst, it's Rage is spent. 320
 To happier Mansions we shall soon remove,
 And meet in Bliss, for we shall meet above.
 Crown'd with eternal Peace, we then shall own
 How poor the Contest for a worldly Throne !
 No Feuds, no Treasons can our Joys molest, 325
 Or shake th' immortal Triumphs of the Blest. ——
 And see, our wish'd-for Haven is not far,
 This Hope shall cheer us like a guiding Star ;
 Safe in our Sea-beat Bark we'll stem the Flood,
 And spread each Sail to meet the coming Good. —— 330
 Descend, my Guardian Angel, from the Skies,
 In my firm Breast let dauntless Virtue rise ;
 4 Loofe,

Loose, loose all Tyes that hold me captive here,
 And from my Mem'ry blot what most was dear. —

Yes, my Deliv'rer, yes, I find thy Aid; 335

Each Passion's calm, and all the Storm is laid.

I felt it's Influence, GUILFORD, as I spoke,

The complicated Chain at length is broke.

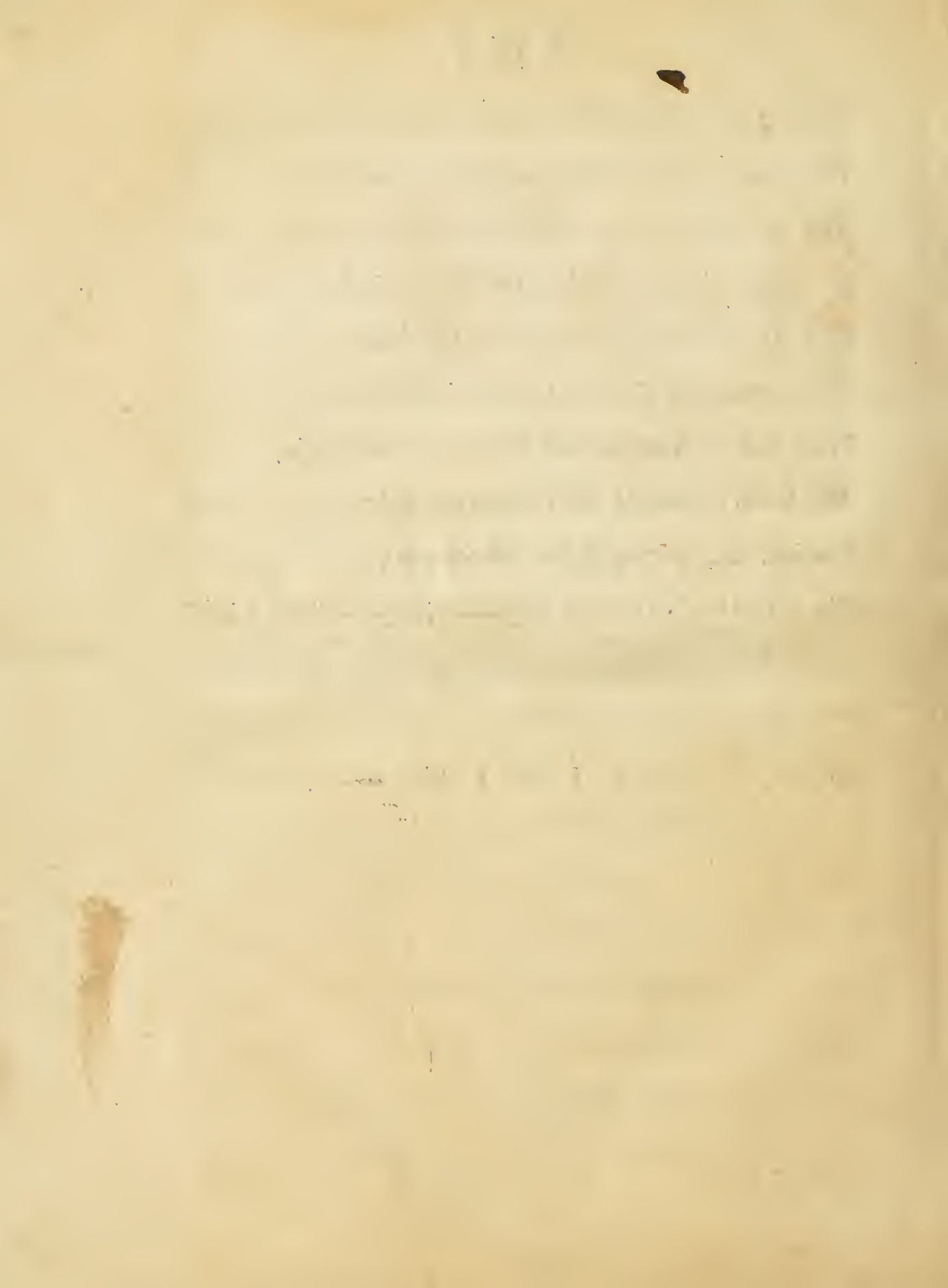
Life's vain Enchantments all have ta'en their Flight,

And Earth diminish'd fades before my Sight. 340

One last, sad, parting Sigh is left for you ;

The rest is Heav'n's: — a long — long — long Adieu!

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